

Worship Series week 1: 2 Samuel 6:14-23, Psalm 95, John 12:1-8

New academic year, new school term, new questions to ask and new things to learn, new discoveries to make.

This morning here at St John's, and across the parish, we are beginning a new 5- week sermon series focussing specifically on worship. We'll be thinking about why and how we worship God, and especially how we do that together.

But first I thought it might be fun to think about some of the things people might worship OTHER than God.

One definition of worship is 'to give worth to, or to adore'. What do you devote your time to? Your money?

Can you think of anything people worship other than God.....I've got a few props that might help.

Sun screen and sunglasses

Strictly come dancing photograph

Phone (how much time do we devote to this....)

Chocolate?!

Mirror (self-worship)

Football scarf

When I was a teenager, I went to watch Reading play regularly at Elm Park. I stood at the back of the South bank. I cheered, I sang, I shouted rude things at the referee. After the game me and my best friend Debbie used to hang around outside the players exit to get their autographs, and to get our photos taken with them.

Especially Mike Kearney, who played number 8.....he had nice eyes....!!

Was that worship?

What does it mean, to worship?

The Old English word 'weorthscipe' means 'to give worth or value to something'.

Another dictionary I checked said, 'to show reverence and adoration for (a deity); to honour with religious rites.'

Another question to ponder: If I were to ask you why you come to church what would you say? (Get answers) To worship God? Is that in our minds?

A few more questions: And I want an honest answer now:

Have you ever found yourself saying:

“I didn’t get anything out of the worship this morning”?

“I really don’t like those modern worship songs?”

“I can’t stand all-age worship so I don’t go that week.”

“I don’t understand why the choir have to sing those classical pieces in Latin, that I don’t understand and can’t join in.”

Do we always come to church to give? Or to receive? What do we mean by that? What does it mean to be a worshipper of God?

I think our two (three) readings this morning teach us a lot about what it means to be a worshipper.

So let’s take each one in turn.

2 Samuel 6:

David was very, very happy. In his day, the Ark of the Covenant was Israel’s most sacred object. It was a symbol of God’s promises to his people. It contained the stone tablets that had the ten commandments on them. Previously the Ark had been captured by the Philistines, Israel’s enemies, but now it had been returned and King David was bringing it to Jerusalem. He was ecstatic.

Imagine a time when you have been over the moon. So full of joy you just couldn’t hold it in. Think footballers winning the world cup. Maybe think of getting married. Winning the lottery. Something that made you burst with joy?

But David was ecstatic before, and because of, GOD. He was celebrating everything that God meant to him.

Exuberant praise. Dancing and leaping.

Have you ever felt like that? In church? At home, just full of praise for God.

David’s focus was totally on God – and he didn’t care what people around him thought.

What about his wife, Michal, was she happy? What was in her heart?

She thought David had made a complete fool of himself. She thought he had been undignified, exposed himself, and she was embarrassed. She despised David.

What did God think? Of David, and his exuberant worship? Of Michal?
'Michal had no child to the day of her death.'

What about the psalm, 95:1-11.

O Come let us sing praise to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise.....O come let us worship and bow down.

Lots of reasons to worship God – he is king above all gods, he made the earth and the seas, he made US, he is our shepherd, he loves us.

But there's also a warning: "Do not harden your hearts like the people did at Massah and Meribah – that's where the Israelites all moaned at Moses and at God and quarrelled and grumbled.

What did God think?

"For forty years I loathed that generation.....in my anger I swore 'they shall never enter my rest'"

What about the gospel.

At Bethany, Jesus is with his friends, Lazarus, Martha and Mary, and suddenly Mary takes out a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anoints Jesus feet and wipes them with her hair. That's an act of devotion. Love. Adoration. She doesn't care what anyone else thinks.

That's worship.

What about Judas? He despises her. He complains about the waste. Though we are told he doesn't really care about the poor. What's in his heart?

What did God think?

Jesus received Mary's worship. He affirmed her actions. He rebuked Judas.
"Leave her alone!"

David, the Psalmist, and Mary were all worshippers. They were showing devotion to God.

What do you think these passages teach us about worship, and what it means to be a worshipper?

It's so easy, isn't it, to look at the way other people worship, and to despise them, because whatever it is they are doing embarrasses us – if people raise their hands, or prostrate themselves, or cross themselves, or bow, or dance, or sing loudly, or do things that just aren't what we do.

But what matters to God is the state of our hearts. Are we devoted to him? Are we honouring him, giving him worth?

I think he delights in heartfelt, unfettered worship – when we give him worth, praise, adoration, devotion.

And I think he encourages us to value the way those around us worship – even if it doesn't always make sense to us. Don't despise one another.

At St John's we are now a very mixed group of people – and I rejoice in that. God has called a whole range of people to be in this family, we are all ages, and different church backgrounds, and some here this morning have virtually no experience of being in church before.

Some of us love hymns, some of us love worship songs, some of us love the Bible, some of us love the liturgy, some of us love holy communion, some of us love to dance, some of us would rather die than dance!

But we are called to be a family, a family that love one another, and that worship God together.

How are we going to do that?

How are we going to be worshippers rather than grumblers and moaners.

I think that's something for us to think about, and talk about, and pray about over these next five weeks.

Pray